ALL SAINTS CHURCH

4550 NORTH HERMITAGE AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO HISTORICAL
AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

JULY 12, 1982

ALL SAINTS CHURCH
4550 North Hermitage Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Architect: John C. Cochrane
Date of Construction: 1883

Late in 1881, a group of Episcopalians living in the Chicago suburb of Ravenswood met with their bishop to request that a church be established in their community. The bishop agreed and the following year a mission church was established in Ravenswood and given the name All Saints. In 1883, the present church structure was built to plans by Chicago architect John C. Cochrane. The church is an example of the Stick Style, an architectural style used primarily for suburban buildings beginning in the East in the 1860s and remaining popular in the Midwest through the 1880s. All Saints Church is a rare example of this style in Chicago and serves as a distinctive reminder of the days when Ravenswood was a Chicago suburb.

The Early History of Ravenswood

When Chicago was incorporated as a city in 1837, the land to the northwest was prairie wilderness. Two roads, which were really little more than foot trails, traversed the area and connected it with the city. To the west was Little Fort Road which led to Waukegan and eventually became Lincoln Avenue; to the east was Green Bay Road which followed a trail that had connected Fort Dearborn with Fort Howard (Green Bay, Wisconsin) and which eventually became Clark Street. In 1837, Conrad and Christine Sulzer began to farm land around Green Bay Road and what later became Montrose (at first called Sulzer) Avenue, becoming the first European settlers of what was to become Lake View Township. During the 1840s, other settlers arrived and established farms to the northwest of the Sulzer property. This area developed into a major farming region that at one time produced most of the celery grown in the United States.

The land to the south and east of the Sulzer property developed more intensively in the early 1850s. This led to the organization of Lake View Township which extended from Fullerton Avenue (then the northern boundary of Chicago) on the south to Devon Avenue on the north, and from Lake Michigan on the east to Western Avenue and the north branch of the Chicago River on the west. The township was incorporated as the Town of Lake View in 1865 and was granted a city charter in 1887.

Improved transportation soon transformed the character of the area and led to its subdivision. A predecessor of the Chicago and North Western Railroad established passenger service to the western part of the township in 1856. After the town's incorporation in 1865, its public roads were improved.

In September, 1868, the Ravenswood Land Company was formed and purchased 194 acres of land, including 40 acres from Conrad Sulzer, to subdivide as the Village of Ravenswood. The original tract was

platted in 1869; additions in 1870, 1871, 1872, and 1878 brought the total area of the village to 360 acres.

In 1869, the land company built a village school. The company also offered a lot free of charge to the first religious organization that could raise the funds to build a church without any indebtedness. This lot went to the Ravenswood Congregational Church, which was organized in 1870 as the first church in the community. A Methodist church was organized in 1872. The Episcopal church was the third to be organized in Ravenswood.

The Founding of All Saints

Shortly after All Saints Day (November 1), 1881, a group of Episcopalian residents of Ravenswood met with the Right Reverend William E. McLaren, the Episcopal Bishop of Chicago, to request that Episcopal services be held in their village. On Sunday, January 15, 1882, the bishop conducted a service in the Methodist church which had been placed at the disposal of the group for this occasion. On March 26, 1882, the bishop conducted a second service in the village, this time at the Congregational church, and announced his decision to establish an Episcopal Church in Ravenswood.

A formal petition signed by approximately seventy residents was presented to the bishop on April 22, 1882, requesting that a mission be established under the name of All Saints Church. On May 14, at a service conducted by Canon J.H. Knowles in the Methodist church, a declaration from the bishop was read granting the petition to organize All Saints mission church. In early June, the Rev. Frederick S. DeMatlos, a deacon, was appointed as missionary to conduct services, which continued to be held in the Methodist church.

At a meeting held on June 10, 1882, it was decided to raise funds to build a church. The fundraising efforts were quite successful, and on August 16, 1882, the site at the southwest corner of what is now Wilson and Hermitage avenues was purchased from John H. Kedzie, one of the original partners in the Ravenswood Land Company.

The area around the site was later described by one of All Saints' early parishioners, Emma Crowder Belt:

> I wish I could bring to your mind as I can to mine what Ravenswood, in the vicinity of All Saints, looked like in 1884. It was a small, beautifully wooded village on the extreme northern edge of the town of Lake View....There were perhaps 700 or 800 families there then.
>
> Before our church was built there was nothing at the corner of Wilson and Hermitage (called Commercial) but two small white cottages facing Hermitage Avenue.... There was nothing back of the church, and the Lincoln Ice Company used to keep their wagons there.
>
> Of course, we had dirt roads in that day and wooden

> sidewalks and ditches; funny little kerosene street lamps that were lit at dusk by the lamplighter. We had one policeman in the village, and the Hose House... situated very near the church on Ravenswood Avenue.... took care of the fires.

In October, 1882, the church wardens and building committee accepted plans for the church prepared by John Crombie Cochrane, a successful Chicago architect. Born in New Hampshire in 1833, Cochrane received his training as an architect and engineer in the office of an uncle. He lived in Chicago briefly in 1855, and during the next nine years practiced architecture in Davenport, Iowa; St. Louis, Missouri; Manchester, New Hampshire; and Boston, Massachusetts. He returned to Chicago in 1864 and practiced architecture here until his death in 1887. In 1867, Cochrane won first prize in a competition for a new state capitol; the present State Capitol in Springfield is his best-known existing work. Cochrane designed several courthouses throughout the Midwest and was responsible for the design of many early churches, hospitals, and residences in Chicago. Cochrane employed many of the architectural styles popular at the time and in All Saints used one that was considered particularly appropriate to suburban buildings, the Stick Style.

The Stick Style

The Stick Style, according to architectural historian Vincent Scully who named the style and did pioneering research into its development, represented a reaction against the Greek Revival style which had preceded it in popularity. The Greek Revival style, which flourished in this country from about 1820 to 1860, used wood to create forms derived from the masonry architecture of ancient Greece. Scully described the Greek Revival style as:

> A skin-deep architecture of wood, delicately and abstractly adjusting to its own properties the forms of stone, the Greek Revival concealed behind its elegant and enigmatic surface the realities of its inherited wooden frame, with its use of post and beam, mortice and tenon...It was an architecture which was applied from without; it did not grow from within or depend upon peculiarly American conditions. In this it was similar to eighteenth century colonial architecture, and in this it continued and indeed concluded the long development of Renaissance design.

The movement away from the formal, symmetrical Greek Revival style was initiated in the 1840s and 1850s by Andrew Jackson Downing, a landscape architect who wrote several extremely influential books on domestic architecture in the United States. In 1850, Dowing published *The Architecture of Country Houses* in which he advocated the basic characteristics that were to mark the Stick Style. Downing preferred picturesque over formal design, what he called "relative beauty" over what he termed "absolute beauty." For Downing, absolute beauty derives from abstract principles of proportion, harmony, unity, and symmetry, whereas relative beauty

"expresses peculiar moral, social, or intellectual ideas, and is usually termed 'beauty of expression.'" Downing states:

> As regularity and proportion are fundamental ideas of absolute beauty, the Picturesque will be found always to depend upon the opposite conditions of matter--irregularity, and a partial want of proportion and symmetry. Thus, the purest Greek architecture, or the finest examples of Palladio, are at once highly symmetrical and beautiful; the varied Italian villa, or the ruder Swiss chalet, highly irregular and picturesque.

In *The Architecture of Country Houses,* Downing also discussed the aesthetic potential inherent in the direct expression of the techniques of wood frame construction. "This new aesthetic sensibility to the expression of the light wood structure," writes Vincent Scully, "in a sense stripped the skin off the Greek Revival and brought the frame to light as the skeleton of a new and organically wooden style." Downing believed that vertical siding was most appropriate for wood frame structures because "the main timbers which enter into the frame of a wooden house and support the structure, are vertical, and hence the vertical boarding properly signifies to the eye a wooden house." This verticality was reinforced by the use of battens, which are narrow strips of wood that are nailed over the vertical joints between two adjacent boards in order to protect those joints from the weather. Board and batten siding became a characteristic of the early development of the Stick Style.

Later in the development of the style, the diagonal trusses that braced the wood frame were expressed on the exterior as well, in diagonal boards applied on top of the wooden sheathing. By the 1860s an appreciation of medieval half-timbering began to be evident in the developing style, as more and more "sticks" were applied to the surface of these buildings. These reflected the various members of the frame and consequently met Downing's demand for "truthfulness" of expression. Scully wrote of this development: "All the elements of the frame moved toward their own expression, and the sense of a basketry of wooden members became the dominant factor in the design."

This applied stickwork divided the wall surface into panels which were filled with clapboarding or shingles. The stickwork was usually painted a darker color than the wall to give the facade a three-dimensional effect. In keeping with Downing's concept of the picturesque, these buildings have complex plans and irregular silhouettes as well as a proliferation of projections, such as eaves and gables, and voids, such as porches and verandas, which create deep shadows across the facade. Porch roofs and gable ends are often supported by brackets and stick-like posts which further suggest the structural framework.

The Stick Style spread westward and became especially popular after the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 at which a number of the state buildings employed the style. In the Chicago area, the Stick Style was popular during the 1870s and 1880s. Because of the city's restrictions on wooden construction following the Chicago Fire of 1871, few Stick Style

structures were built within the city. Instead, they were built in suburban areas, such as Austin and Ravenswood, that are now part of Chicago. All Saints is perhaps the only Stick Style church that survives in the city.

All Saints Church

Construction of All Saints began in October, 1882, and the church was completed the following spring. It was formally opened on March 2,1884 by Bishop McLaren. All Saints is a one-story frame structure with a high, broad gabled roof. The building is forty-one feet wide and ninety-seven feet long with its short, gabled end facing Hermitage Avenue and its long side running along Wilson Avenue. At the northeast corner is a tall bell tower. The original bell was installed in 1885 and dedicated on Christmas of that year. For many years, this bell was used when fires occurred to summon members of the volunteer fire company to the Lake View fire station a few blocks west of the church. An electrical apparatus was also installed so that the bell could be rung from the Lake View police station which was at Addison and Sheffield avenues. Originally, there was an entrance to the church at the base of the tower facing Wilson Avenue. The entrance has since been removed, and the Hermitage Avenue entrance enlarged to serve as the main entry to the church.

Above the main entrance, a large, multi-part stained glass window occupies most of the east facade of the structure. Above the window, the topmost portion of the gable projects and is supported by brackets. At the corner is the tall bell tower, the lower portion of which is topped by a projecting roof with bracketed gables. Above this roof rises the belfry itself. This was originally open but was enclosed in 1946. It is topped by a tall, steeply pitched roof. Along the low north facade of the church is a row of simply treated stained glass windows. The lower portion of the structure and most of the bell tower are stuccoed. Above the stucco the church is clad in wooden shingles. Diagonal stickwork marks the various gables. The church was recently painted a bright yellow and the stickwork and trim a dark brown.

The interior is simply treated. Its most distinctive feature is the series of wooden open-work trusses that support the high ceiling. Although they span a considerable space, they are nevertheless quite open and light. This direct expression of structure on the interior is another feature that marks All Saints as a distinctively Stick Style building. Tie rods have been installed across each truss to prevent expansion of the exterior walls from the weight of the roof. Wood trim and brightly colored stained glass windows with simple geometric patterns also mark the interior space.

In 1885, All Saints Mission was incorporated as a parish which it remains today. Among the early parishioners were Grace and Angelina Sulzer, descendants of Conrad and Christine Sulzer, Ravenswood's first settlers. Later, poet Carl Sandburg worshipped there when he lived briefly in the next block of Hermitage Avenue.

Various additions and alterations have been made to the original church structure over the years. In 1891, the original parish hall to the west of the church was dedicated; according to one account this hall had been fashioned from two barns that had been moved to the property in 1884. Also in 1891, a parishioner donated a frame house on Hermitage Avenue just north

of Wilson for use as a rectory. This property was later exchanged for the lot just south of the church on which the present rectory was built in 1905. Designed by architect John Hulla, a member of All Saints, the present rectory is brick and stucco and has half-timbering on its upper floors. In 1899, the original church was enlarged by the addition of the present chancel and choir at the west end. A major fire occurred in 1912, causing considerable damage to the church and destroying the roof. The present roof was added subsequently. Another fire in 1928 also caused substantial damage. In 1924, the present one-story office structure was constructed between the church and the rectory. In the late 1920s, the parish planned to demolish the church and replace it with an elaborate neo-Gothic complex. The Depression put an end to that scheme, but one part of the complex was eventually built. In 1938, the old parish hall was demolished and the present neo-Gothic parish hall was built to the west of the church.

Although All Saints today serves an ethnically diverse urban community, its quaint Stick Style building is a visual reminder of the period in the late nineteenth century when Ravenswood was a quiet suburban village north of the rapidly growing city of Chicago.

(OPPOSITE) All Saints Church is perhaps the oldest frame church in use in Chicago. For many years, the bell in its tall bell tower was used to summon volunteer firemen to the Lake View township fire station a few blocks west of the church. (Stepehen Beal, photographer)

photo n

name A

address

date

archite

view E

photog
or sou

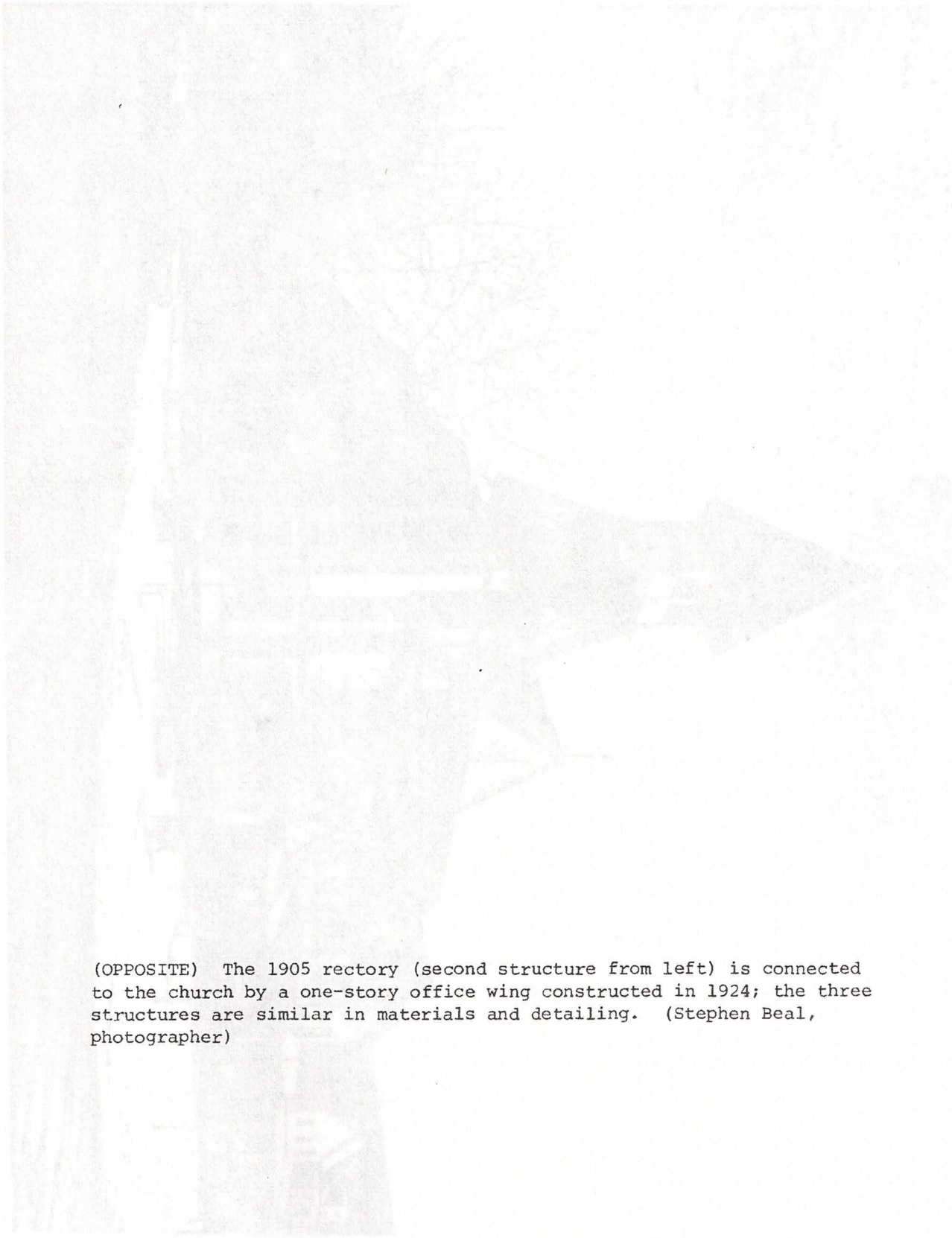
source

date o

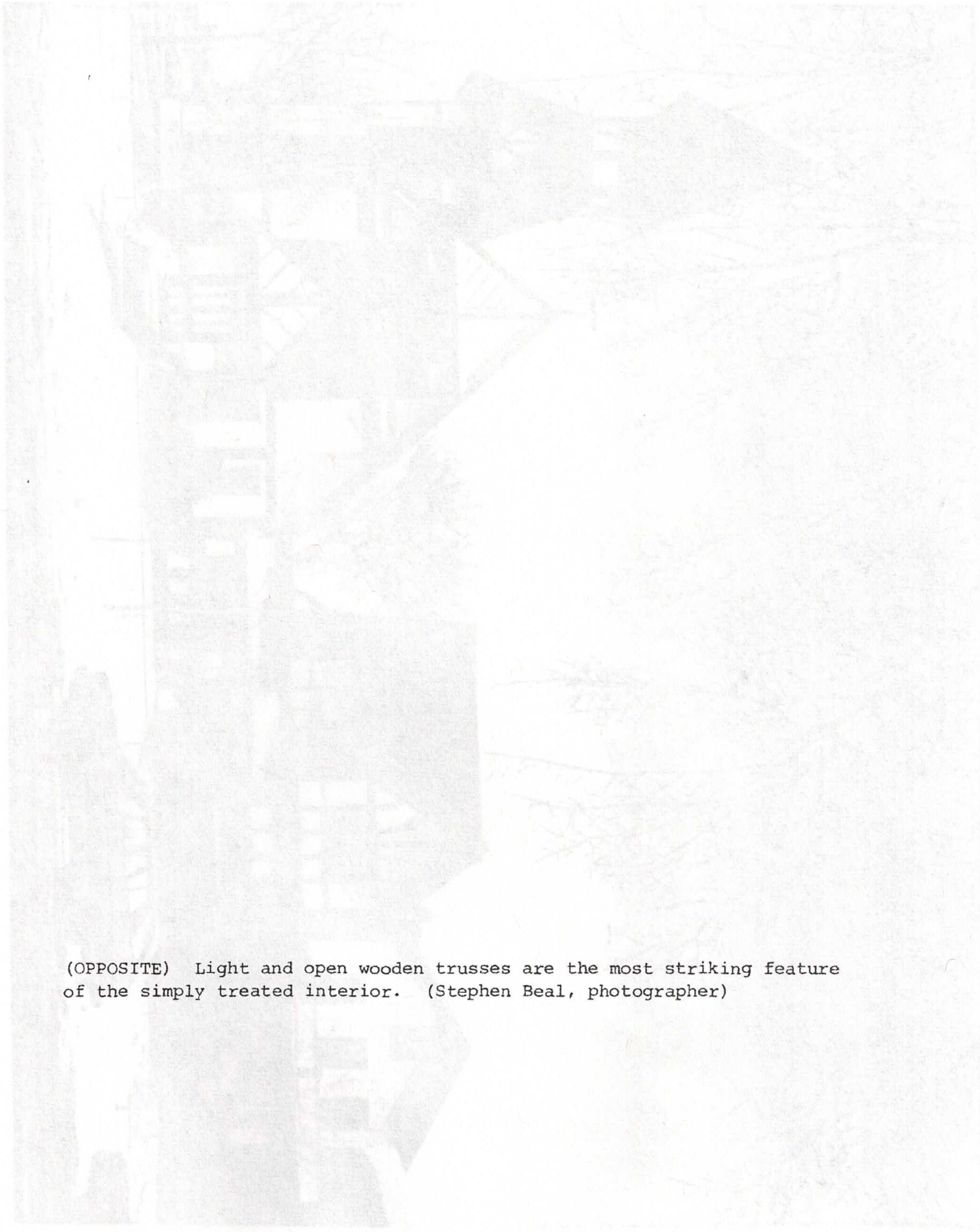
exhibi

misc.

PHOTO
COMMIS
HISTOR



(OPPOSITE) The 1905 rectory (second structure from left) is connected to the church by a one-story office wing constructed in 1924; the three structures are similar in materials and detailing. (Stephen Beal, photographer)



(OPPOSITE) Light and open wooden trusses are the most striking feature of the simply treated interior. (Stephen Beal, photographer)